

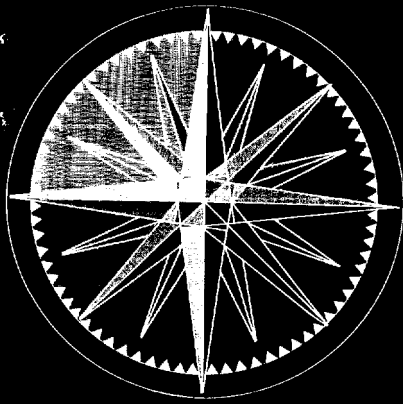
SECRET

Release 2006/12/27 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004100110002-5

23 August 1963

OCI No. 0294/63A

Copy No. 75



SPECIAL REPORT

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOVIET CULTURAL POLICY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

MORI/CDF Pages 1-7

NO FOREIGN DISSEM

SECRET

GROUP 1. Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

THIS MATERIAL CONTAINS INFORMATION AFFECT-
ING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE OF THE UNITED STATES
WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE ESPIONAGE LAWS,
TITLE 18, USC, SECTIONS 793 AND 794, THE TRANSMIS-
SION OR REVELATION OF WHICH IN ANY MANNER TO
AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON IS PROHIBITED BY LAW.

DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

This document MUST NOT BE RELEASED TO FOREIGN
GOVERNMENTS. If marked with specific dissemination
controls in accordance with the provisions of DCID 1/7,
the document must be handled within the framework of
the limitation so imposed.

SECRET

23 August 1963

DEVELOPMENTS IN SOVIET CULTURAL POLICY

In the two months since the inconclusive party central committee plenum in June, Soviet actions in the cultural field have been contradictory. The regime needs to control public expressions of nonconformity by its restive intelligentsia, but it is reluctant to inhibit the creative initiative developed since Stalin's death. The two concrete proposals advanced at the plenum--reorganization of the Soviet press and of the cultural unions--have not thus far been implemented. Moreover, some of the unrepentant liberal intellectuals are being allowed to travel abroad and have been granted some public hearing at home. The regime has, however, strengthened its administrative control mechanisms in the areas of the stage and of publishing, and has replaced a few liberal officials in the Writers Union with moderate conservatives. The limited extent of repressive measures taken to date suggests that the Kremlin has once again tried to settle for muffling rather than for silencing unorthodoxy.

Theater Controls Revived

The Ministry of Culture on 7 August announced the formation of repertory and editing collegiums to "guide" the selection of theater repertories. Soviet theaters have had the legal right to plan their own repertories since September 1956, although the Ministry of Culture's Department of Theaters retained the responsibility for "checking" on the plays presented. The withdrawal of state subsidies in 1959--which forced the theaters to depend on box-office receipts--in conjunction with the freedom to select offerings made the theater more responsive to the tastes of its patrons, who have made it plain that they are bored by the usual "socialist realism" fare.

The resulting presentation of a series of increasingly accurate portrayals of Soviet life has brought cries of outrage from conservative critics. Occasionally, in response to these outcries, a play has been withdrawn for rewriting in the middle of a run. This patchwork editing has rarely been successful, however, resulting at best in the deletion of a few particularly outspoken lines or the grafting on of a totally inappropriate "happy ending" without changing the over-all mood of the play.

The new repertory and editing collegiums will probably work under the Ministry of Culture's Department of Theaters to provide censorship during the writing and rehearsal of plays, rather than after they have been

SECRET

SECRET

presented to the public. They are also likely to be responsible for preventing the staging of "too many" Western plays--which in the past have proved a boon to theater managers facing empty houses. The exercise of the censorship function will be inhibited, however, by the tendency of socialist realism to alienate Soviet audiences, increasingly sophisticated and demanding after ten years of the intellectual thaw.

New State Committee for the Press

The duties of the new State Committee for the Press are less clear. The announcement of its formation on 10 August indicated that it is to "guide" publishing houses, the printing industry, and the book trade. It thus appears to have assumed the functions of the Ministry of Culture's Main Administration for Publishing Houses, the Printing Industry, and Book Trade (Glavizdat). Loss of Glavizdat responsibilities would be the second large loss sustained by Madame Furtseva's ministry in recent months. Cinematography was set up as an independent state committee last March.

One of the new committee's concerns may be to prevent duplication in the publication of books and brochures--an old problem in nonfictional fields. Criticism of the book trade frequently assails the number of unsalable nonfiction books and pamphlets gathering dust in bookstores. A recent article in Soviet Culture complained

that a single year may produce some 700 new titles on how to raise corn, cattle, swine, and poultry. A similar article in Izvestia questioned the need for or even the advisability of publishing 11,000 new titles in political literature in 1962 alone.

Pavel Romanov, the chairman of the new state committee, was formerly head of the Main Administration for the Protection of Military and State Secrets in the Press, more familiarly known as Glavlit. His selection may indicate a merger of the Glavlit and Glavizdat functions in the new committee. The scope of Glavlit's censorship functions is not known, but in recent years it has not appeared to include ideological--as opposed to security--responsibilities.

The new chairman is apparently not a press and publishing tsar--a role which Soviet rumors earlier predicted would be awarded to Khrushchev's son-in-law Aleksey Adzhubey. The major Soviet newspapers and journals and the specialized publishing houses are variously subordinated to the party central committee, the komsomol, certain ministries, and the cultural unions. Effective intervention in their chains of command would require greater prestige than Romanov--who is not even a candidate member of the central committee--can muster.

New Look in Soviet Press Lacking

No action has yet been taken toward reorganizing the Soviet

SECRET

SECRET

press, although this was one of the few concrete measures called for in the concluding resolution of the June plenum. Soon after that resolution was published, a "well-informed Soviet source" in Moscow described to Western newsmen a grandiose plan for greatly expanded issues of Pravda, Izvestia, and Komsomolskaya Pravda, with special daily sections for arts, science, sports, and economics. Half of the 30 national, local, and specialized newspapers now published in the Soviet Union were to be abolished, and their functions taken over by the specialized sections of the major dailies. This plan may still be under discussion, but it has not been referred to publicly since that time.

Status of the Artistic Unions

At the June plenum, Ilichev and other party spokesmen expressed strong support for a proposal first advanced by cultural arch-conservatives last winter--the formation of a single cultural union. It has never been clear whether this proposed single union would replace the existing artists, writers', composers', and cinematographers' unions, or whether it would be superimposed above them as an additional organizational level. In either case, the intent of the proposal was clear; the new union would be used to dilute the strong professional ties among the liberal intellectuals and would provide a new administrative mechanism to be controlled by the conservatives. Despite Ilichev's endorsement, the proposal was not

included in the concluding resolution of the plenum. Discussions of the union have continued to receive wide attention in the press, but no formal decision has yet been announced.

Editorial boards of the liberal literary journals remain unchanged. Although the June issue of Novy Mir appeared almost a month late, the journal managed nevertheless to retain its liberal bias. It carried a story by Nikolay Dubov, whose work has been harshly criticized in the past, and a section of the memoirs of the liberal Konstantin Paustovsky, who was under attack this spring as a "spiritual father" of the younger nonconformists. The memoirs are devoid of the ideological content demanded by the regime, and contain the comment that "youth has always been busy with quarrels and passions, has always disturbed its elders." The regime contends that there are not and cannot be differences between the two generations in the Soviet Union.

Some moves have been made, however, toward dissipating the liberals' influence. Liberally oriented party organizations of the Moscow branches of the cultural unions have been dissolved, and party control of cultural work has been assumed directly by the Moscow City Party Committee. Writers, artists, and musicians who were party members are being registered at party organizations in factories in the Moscow area, thus dispersing groups which had

SECRET

SECRET

been centers of liberalism within the party itself. It is unlikely, however, that contact with factory party people will change the nonconformist views of the intellectuals.

Elections in late July to the Moscow Writers' Branch secretariat eliminated such young liberals as Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Andrey Voznesensky, and Robert Rozhdestvensky, who had gained control last year. The majority of the new members of the secretariat, while more acceptable to the conservative chairman of the branch, Georgy Markov, have shown moderate tendencies in the past and were somewhat restrained in their support of the cultural crackdown last spring. The arch-conservatives such as Vsevolod Kochetov and Nikolay Gribachev do not appear to be taking an active part in the work of the branch.

Reappearance of Some Liberal Intellectuals

In an apparent effort to blunt charges of return to Stalinism, the regime has allowed some of the liberal intelligentsia to travel abroad and has granted them a limited public hearing at home despite their continued recalcitrance. Modernist painter Ilya Glazunov, who, because of his nonconformity, has never been admitted to the USSR Artists Union or been permitted to exhibit publicly in the Soviet Union, was allowed to go to Italy and to hold two public showings there. Aleksandr Tvardovsky, chief editor of Novy

Mir, was also allowed a trip to Italy in June.

Pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy, after vacillating publicly and at length about whether to remain in England after a concert tour, eventually returned to Moscow in June, first for a visit, then "permanently." Despite his obvious uncertainty, however, he was allowed to leave the USSR again in July for a concert tour in Iceland. His lack of sympathy with the regime's cultural policy was evident in a press interview he gave while in Iceland in which he defended two of the major nonconformist writers--poet Yevtushenko and prose writer Viktor Nekrasov--and predicted that both would return to favor in the future as have "many artists suppressed by Stalin."

Subsequent reports indicate that Yevtushenko's latest book of poems, held up since March, will soon appear. Yevtushenko himself appeared briefly at the Moscow Film Festival in July, explaining that he had been in Cuba conferring about a movie script. Film director Grigory Chukhray, whose movies have been permeated with the thaw movement, was chairman of the jury at the film festival.

A meeting of Soviet and European writers which opened in Leningrad on 5 August was the occasion for the reappearance of other unrepentant liberals, including Ilya Ehrenburg, the young novelist Vasily Aksenov, and Tvardovsky. In his first public statement since March, Ehrenburg made a strong

SECRET

SECRET

plea for continued experimentation in art--a favorite theme and the point on which most of last spring's criticism of him centered--and urged closer ties between Soviet and Western intellectuals so that Soviet writers could learn more about Western literature.

Later, at a meeting with Khrushchev at his Black Sea retreat, Tvardovsky read a new poem which was then published in full in Izvestia. The poem, which must be considered to have Khrushchev's approval, was described by Izvestia as "a bitter satire." Its content was distinctly liberal, with overtones of criticism and anti-Stalinist sentiment.

Aksenov's Leningrad speech at the Leningrad writers' meeting has not yet been reported. The fact that he was allowed to return from his Siberian trip--ordered in May as a disciplinary measure--for his first participation in an international writers' conference will encourage other nonconformists. The publication of excerpts from the Ehrenburg speech in Literary Gazette, the Tvardovsky poem in Izvestia, and a new short story by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the recently criticized author of "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," will further hearten the liberal intellectuals as evidence that those who refuse to conform can still make their voices heard. (CONFIDENTIAL)

* * *

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET